

**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 20, 2023

The Honorable Deb Haaland  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland:

The Department of Defense is currently grappling with a large-scale leak of highly classified materials, the damage of which remains to be determined.<sup>1</sup> Although reports of the leak circulated widely in mainstream media outlets beginning April 7, 2023, images of the highly classified documents were posted on social media platforms more than a month prior to broad coverage of the leaked material.<sup>2</sup>

As a member of President Biden's Cabinet, you may have been made aware of additional classified information regarding these leaks, including any potential nexus the current tranche of materials has with the Department of the Interior ("DOI") and its assets. Because DOI owns approximately 43,000 buildings, 115,000 miles of road, and 83,000 structures<sup>3</sup>— ranging from dams to laboratories — the House Committee on Natural Resources (the "Committee") is interested in understanding how this or future document leaks could impact key assets and how DOI plans to ensure its continued cyber and physical security.

Hacking and cybersecurity threats by private individuals or, more alarmingly, state-sponsored attacks, are not new to DOI. On January 3, 2023, the Office of the Inspector General for DOI released a report finding that DOI's "management practices and password complexity requirements were not sufficient to prevent potential unauthorized access to its systems and data."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy A. Youssef, *The Pentagon's Purported Classified-Document Leak: The Biggest Takeaways and Questions So Far*, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL (Updated Apr. 17, 2023), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/pentagon-leak-classified-intelligence-documents-takeaways-6dd576b8>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *A Review of the President's Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Request for the Department of the Interior Before the Subcomm. on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies of the S. Comm. on Appropriations*, 118<sup>th</sup> Cong. (Mar. 29, 2023) (Statement of Dep't of the Interior Sec. Deb Haaland), <https://www.doi.gov/ocl/interior-budget-13#:~:text=The%20Department's%202024%20budget%20totals.from%20the%202023%20enacted%20budget>.

<sup>4</sup> Office of Inspector General, *P@s\$w0rds at the U.S. Department of the Interior: Easily Cracked Passwords, Lack of Multifactor Authentication, and Other Failures Put Critical DOI Systems at Risk*, U.S. DEP'T OF THE INTERIOR

The report also found a staggering 21% of active accounts had passwords that were easily breached in a simulated cybersecurity attack, including hundreds of senior service employees.<sup>5</sup> The report further notes that the infamous Colonial Pipeline breach of 2021 could be traced to a single stolen password.<sup>6</sup>

As the details of the current intelligence leak continue to emerge, the Committee is concerned that DOI's assets may remain vulnerable to emerging cybersecurity threats. The Committee recently received a concerning report from the DOI Office of the Inspector General which found that DOI's "information security program was not effective."<sup>7</sup> The report provides 24 recommendations to strengthen DOI's information security program, including those of DOI's bureaus and offices.<sup>8</sup>

Although information security breaches are not new, the Committee is particularly concerned about the vulnerability of DOI's assets to classified material leaks, and DOI's ability to prepare for and prevent systemic attacks from both internal and external threats. The Committee requests a briefing on the timeline for the implementation of the Inspector General's recommendations. The briefing should also include any additional internal or external findings related to DOI's assets, their vulnerabilities, and DOI's actions to prepare for cyberthreats from both internal and external sources.

Please contact the Majority staff for the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee at (202) 225-2761 or [HNRR.Oversight@mail.house.gov](mailto:HNRR.Oversight@mail.house.gov) with any questions and to schedule a briefing by May 1, 2023. Thank you for your cooperation and prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Bruce Westerman  
Chairman  
Committee on Natural Resources



Paul Gosar, D.D.S.  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Investigations & Oversight  
Committee on Natural Resources

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(Jan. 3, 2023), [https://www.doioig.gov/sites/default/files/2021-migration/Final%20Inspection%20Report\\_DOI%20Password\\_Public.pdf?emci=66664715-fd90-ed11-9d7b-00224832e811&emdi=7f680e01-0491-ed11-9d7b-00224832e811&ceid=90116](https://www.doioig.gov/sites/default/files/2021-migration/Final%20Inspection%20Report_DOI%20Password_Public.pdf?emci=66664715-fd90-ed11-9d7b-00224832e811&emdi=7f680e01-0491-ed11-9d7b-00224832e811&ceid=90116).

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* at 13.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at 34.

<sup>7</sup> Office of the Inspector General, *Summary: Independent Auditors' Performance Audit Report on the U.S. Department of the Interior Federal Information Security Modernization Act for Fiscal Year 2022*, U.S. DEP'T OF THE INTERIOR (Apr. 5, 2023), <https://www.doioig.gov/reports/audit/summary-independent-auditors-performance-audit-report-us-department-interior-federal>

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*